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### **Allen working to save Newberry prison**

**LANSING** – Legislation calling for the closure of the Newberry Correctional Facility pending before the Senate Appropriations Committee will face opposition, announced Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City.

“The closing of the Newberry prison will have a dramatic impact on the Upper Peninsula,” Allen said. “I am very concerned about the proposed closing and the major impact it will have on the families, schools, and businesses in the area. I do not want to see that happen.”

Senate Bill 268 establishes the Department of Corrections budget for the 2005-2006 fiscal year. After a recent revenue estimating conference, it was determined that there was an overall budget shortfall of \$475 million, with the Corrections budget needing to be cut an additional \$30 million from the governor’s original recommendation.

“I am working with members in both the House and Senate to make them aware of the magnitude that such a closure would have on the Upper Peninsula and the importance of keeping this facility open,” Allen said. “I am confident that a balanced corrections budget can be achieved without closing the Newberry Correctional Facility.”

The subcommittee chair reviewed a number of options to eliminate this funding gap. Unfortunately, closing the Newberry facility was chosen due to the disproportionate cost of operating the facility and its ability to close this hole by its closure.

Michigan’s budget woes stem from a steady loss of jobs over the last few years, coupled with declining state and federal revenues. One of every five manufacturing jobs lost over the past three years have been lost from Michigan. The state is faced with some of the highest unemployment rates and bankruptcies in the nation.

“At a time when Michigan’s economy is struggling, we must be diligent in funding of programs that have a direct connection to our economy – eliminating jobs from an area already troubled by unemployment is not the answer,” Allen said. “I encourage residents in the Upper Peninsula to write the governor and the members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to urge them to reinstate funding for the prison and to take a second look at funding special projects in southeast Michigan, such as the Detroit People Mover.”

SB 268 is expected to be up for a vote before the full Senate in the coming weeks.

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